

REMARKS

Claims 2-5, 9, 13-15, 17-23 and 31-34 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 15 and 17-23 are amended, and claims 1, 8 and 10 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary to place the application in condition for allowance. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of claims 32-34. By this Amendment, claims 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 15 and 17-23 are amended to depend from independent claim 34. Accordingly, all of the pending dependent claims are allowable at least for their dependence on allowable claim 34.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-5, 8-10, 13-15, 17, 18, 20-23 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over one of Bianchi, EP 1164684A, DE 19723302A, and DE 3016540A, in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,265,804 to Nitta et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1, 8 and 10 are canceled by this Amendment. Therefore, the rejection of claims 1, 8 and 10 is moot.

Claims 2-5, 9, 13-15, 17, 18, 20-23 and 31 are allowable at least for their dependence on an allowable base claim, as well as for the additional features they recite. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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